AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE DOCTRINES

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1830.

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IN many late numbers of the paper issued under the patronage of the Methodists, called the Christian Observer; in a very able pamphlet, entitled *Truth Advocated* by Vindex: published in Philadelphia, 1822, by some Quaker of Delaware; and in *Spark's Inquiry into the moral tendency of Unitarian and Trinitarian doctrines:* Boston, 1823, some able views are presented of the character and bearing of Presbyterian orthodoxy, or calvinism. The following pages contain little that the reader will not find in those publications. But so imperfect and so slow is the propagation of knowledge in this country, by any other means than newspapers, that no book or pamphlet, however meritorious on a serious subject, has any chance of sale beyond the immediate neighborhood of the place of its publication. It is allowable, therefore, for a writer in Georgia to repeat what has been already said by a writer in Vermont or Maine, and *vice versa;* for there is about as much literary intercourse between either of those places and Japan, as with each other. Such is my apology for detailing useful truths that have been already expressed pretty much in the same way by those who have gone before me. I am perfectly sure, that some people will read this pamphlet who have never met with the works to which I am indebted.

I propose to exhibit briefly, the maxims and the character of CALVINISM, as it is found in writers of eminence among the divines admired by the Presbyterians—maxims that have been confirmed in the creed of that sect, as set forth in the Westminster confession of faith, and the larger and shorter catechisms: and I mean to appeal to my readers, whether a man who *really believes* those doctrines, and *makes them the guide of his conduct*, can be a good citizen or a good man. The essential features of Calvinism are contained in the FIVE points; the quinquarticular controversy of the synod of DORT, (1618, 1619) election, redemption, original sin, effectual grace, and final perseverance. Or, as *Sparkes* arranges them, total depravity, (i. e. of the natural man, or original sin) irresistible grace, divine decrees, particular redemption, and final perseverance. (i. e. of the saints or the elect.*) The meaning is the same.

I prefer taking up these essential points of Calvinistic orthodoxy in the following order: divine decrees, total depravity, irresistible grace, particular redemption, final perseverance.

And first, of *divine decrees:* connected also with election and reprobation. "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he hath determined in himself what he would have become of every indivi-

* John Wesley, who was a remonstrant or arminian, used to express the final perseverance, (which he did not hold) thus: "My brother, George Whitfield, thinks that a sinner once called through grace to repentance, may fall foully, but not finally: *we* think he may fall both foully and finally."

dual of mankind. (Calvin Instit., l. 3, c. 21, § 5.) And he adds, immediately after, "they are not all created to an equal condition, but to some, eternal life is foreordained, to others, eternal damnation. Since, therefore, every man is destined to one or the other of those ends, we say he is predestinated to life or death." (Ib.) Again:

"I say, that by the ordination, and will of God, Adam fell. God would have man to fall. Man is blinded, by the will and command of God. We refer the cause of hardening us to God. Every action and motion of every creature, is so governed by the hidden counsel of God, that nothing can come to pass but what was ordained by him: they are so governed by the will of God, that they are carried on straight to the mark which he has foreordained." *Calvin's Instit.*

"God hath predestinated not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it. The decree of God cannot be excluded from the causes of corruption." *Beza.*

"It is certain that God is the first cause of obduration. Reprobates are held so fast under God Almighty's decree, that they cannot but sin and perish." *Zanchius.*

"It is the opinion of our doctors, that God did inevitably decree the temptation and fall of man. The creature indeed sinneth necessarily by the most just judgments of God. Our men do most righteously affirm, that the fall of man was necessary and inevitable because of God's decree." *Parœus.*

"Reprobate persons are absolutely ordained to this two-fold end; to undergo everlasting punishment and necessarily to sin, and therefore to sin that they may be justly punished." *Piscator.*

"God procures cursings, adulteries, lyings."

"God doth incline and force the wills of wicked men into great sins.—He supplies wicked men with opportunities of sinning; and induces their hearts thereto. He blinds, deceives, and seduces them. He, by his working on their hearts, bends and stirs them up to do evil." *Pet. Martyr.*

"God moveth the robber to kill. He killeth, God forcing him thereunto. The devil and wicked men are so held in by the hand of God, that they cannot conceive or execute any mischief, farther than God himself doth not only permit but command. Nor are they only held in fetters, but compelled also, as with a bridle to perform obedience to those commands." —*Zuinglius.*

"God moves, excites, and stirs men up to do that which is evil, and puts sin into the heart by a positive creative influence." *Hopkins*, a modern.

"God knew that no motive would be sufficient to form Pharaoh's moral character: he therefore determined to operate in his heart itself, and to cause him to put forth certain evil volitions, in view of certain external motives." *Emmons*, a modern.

In England, imprisonment was threatened by an act of the Presbyterian parliament, to such as maintained that "*man by nature hath free will to turn to God.*" Neal's hist. of the Purit. v. iii. p. 497. Moshiem v. 5, c. 3.

From these quotations and tenets, it follows demonstrably—

That if God forces the robber to kill, the seducer to commit adultery, the liar to deceive, the blasphemer to curse and revile—if he supplies wicked men with opportunities of sinning, and incites them to sin, so that they cannot conceive, or contrive, or execute any mischief but in obedience to his commands—if God does all this, and inflicts eternal torments on poor wretches whom he pre-ordains, and compels thus to act, and is

not to be considered as the grand author of all wickedness, the most detestable, malicious, and cruel being that the human mind can contrive to frame an idea of—then words have lost their use and meaning, and have ceased to represent ideas!

To deny that this blasphemous imputation on the moral character of the deity, is the unavoidable result of predestination, and the Calvinistic doctrine of the divine decrees, is to put all rational deduction at defiance.—(Vindex.)

To love such a being—to consider him in any other light than the vulgar do the devil, is utterly impossible; unless to one whose head and heart are equally perverted. On this scheme the deity is no longer the benevolent, impartial, indiscriminate parent and judge of the human race, but a horrid and capricious tyrant, whose actions are in conformity to his expressions, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." "Hath not the potter power over his clay, to make of some vessels of honor, and of others vessels of dishonor?"

On this scheme the deity is made to punish the weak instruments of his vengeance, not for *their* own actions, but for *his* own: for actions that he predestined and decreed; and incited, impelled, and forced them to commit. If men are depraved in consequence of obedience to God's commands, and in conformity to his foreknowledge, they not only could not be otherwise, but if they could, they would be rebellious and punishable. When we are told by these pious Presbyterians, that the prayers of the unregenerate are an abomination in the sight of God; and by the Presbyterian confession of faith, (xvi. 7,) as well as by the articles of the church of England, that even the good works of the unregenerate are sinful, it is perfectly consistent with the doctrine that makes God at once the author of sin, and the punisher and avenger of it.

On this scheme, what cruel delusion is it to tell men that they are to avoid evil, and to do good; that they are to obey God's commands! Of what use is it to give them any commands? Of what use is preaching? Is it possible to convert one of the non-elect? Can the solemn mockery of these hired and paid priests, uttered from the pulpit, produce any effect whatever, either on the reprobate whom God has from eternity selected for eternal damnation, do what they can—or on the elect whom he has from eternity selected for salvation, happiness, and glory, do what they will? Is not this praying and sermonizing, at the very best, a culpable waste of words, and waste of time in the preacher? Is it not absolute swindling to take money for the congregation, for this most useless and deceptive preaching?

I challenge any reader to produce me, from ancient or modern times, a set of tenets so absolutely, so unprovokedly, cruel, blasphemous, and devilish. I deny that the doctrine of the priests of Jaggernaut has any thing in it half so absurd, so inhuman. The mischief of that idol is confined to the present life. Nay, whatever the priests of Jaggernaut are, or whatever they say or do, they say and do it as the irresponsible instruments—the mere blind tools of the deity of the Calvinists, if the latter say true.

On this scheme, there is no good person, or bad person; no room for obedience or disobedience; for advice, exhortation, admonition, praise, or blame. If the wife of one of those sectarians should play the harlot, or his son murder his mother, what right has the husband or father to complain? Could it have been otherwise? Was it not ordered, and pre-ordained from the beginning—from all eternity, before time was? Infalli-

bly, unchangeably, to use their own expressions? But it may be objected, these are the ultra, and violent notions of men of former times; they are strong opinions now out of date; schemes of good but mistaken men, who were misled by the prevalent rigid orthodoxy of the day. Let us see. I beg of my reader to turn to the Westminster Confession of Faith, or to *the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, revised and republished*, 1821. In the Confession of Faith, c. 3, art. 1 to 7, he will find the following doctrines—

"God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass." It is added, "yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

This is not an explanation, but a contradiction. That which is *unchangeably ordained*, cannot but come to pass in manner exactly as it is ordained. To talk of *contingency* in such a case, is absolute nonsense. If a sinful act be unchangeably ordained by God, he is the author of it.

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory,* some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained unto everlasting death.

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it can neither be increased or diminished.

"Those of mankind who are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverence in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

"So God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

"The rest of mankind, God was pleased according the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by or ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." Conf. iii. 7.

How could this be *their* sin? Or why is he wroth because that has happened which he ordained to happen? However, let us go on.

"By the decree of God, *all things* come to pass immutably and infallibly. c. v. § 2.

"God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect. c. xi. § 1.

"As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God, as a righteous judge, doth *blind and harden*, from them he not only withholdeth his grace,

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* O, thou, who best to please thysel',
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory!
And no for ony gude or ill
They've done before thee!

Holy Willy's Prayer.

whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also, withdraweth the gifts which they had. c. v. § 6.

"From this original corruption we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." c. vi. § 4.

Larger Catechism, qu. 12, "*What are God's decrees?* Answer. God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, *unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time*, especially concerning angels and men."

This includes, therefore, the existence and the conduct of the non elect.

Qu. 14, "*How doth God execute his decrees?* Answer. According to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will."

Qu. 89, "*What shall be done to the wicked* (that is the non elect, whom God doth blind and harden, and from whom he withholdeth his grace, without which they are unable to turn from their wickedness. See Confess. v. 6. For the elect only are effectually called. Larg. cat., qu. 68) *at the day of judgment?* Answer. The wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand, and upon clear evidence and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them; and thereupon shall be cast out from the favourable presence of God, and the glorious fellowship with Christ, his son, and all his holy angels, into hell; to be punished with unspeakable torments of body and soul, with the devil and his angels, forever."

That is, for having done what the decrees of the Almighty, from all eternity, had infallibly, unchangeably, foreordained they should do, and which he took good care they should do, by hardening their hearts, and withholding from them that grace which alone could impart, and without which they could not do otherwise; and all for the praise of his *glorious grace* (Confess. iii. 5) and *glorious justice!* (Confess. iii. 7.)

Larger Catechism, qu. 60, "*Can they who have never heard the gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their living according to the light of Nature?* Answer. They who having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of Nature, or the laws of that religion they profess. Neither is there salvation in any other but in Christ alone, who is the saviour only of his body the church."

It appears then, that modern Presbyterian, and Calviniistic orthodoxy—the orthodoxy of the now present day, is exactly the same with the orthodoxy of John Calvin, Zuinglius, Peter Martyr, and Jerom Zanchius; and the consequences to which the tenets of these fathers of the church are liable, flow fully and equally from the doctrines that constitute orthodoxy at the present day. What need, then, has the saint or the sinner to take heed to his conduct? They are, or are not of the elect; nor can they change their own eternal and immutable destiny. Let the saint then take his fill of worldly pleasure, heedless of the consequence, which cannot deprive him for one moment of an eternity of happiness and glory. Let the sinner sin on; his destiny is in like manner settled; he can be no worse.

But upon what honest pretence can the clergy, who hold these doctrines, take pay for their labors? Can they alter one iota of the infallible, irresistible, immutable, decrees of the Almighty? Is it in *their* power to

change the destiny of one of the elect, or to contribute in the slightest degree to save one sinner? What! can a poor, finite, pulpit declaimer, change the unalterable decrees of God? Presumptuous man! for what purpose are your solemn mockeries of prayer and preaching, but to sink in oblivion, and to hide under a mass of words your own contradictions, and to furnish plausible pretences to prey upon the substance of the timid, the ignorant, and the bigoted? Are not your professions contradictory? Your efforts at conversion, by your own shewing, utterly unavailing? And how differs your trade from what is usually termed *swindling*—the obtaining of money by imposture, and under false pretences?

Calvin's mode of reasoning is wort y of his doctrine. Instit. 1. 3, c. 23, § 9) "The reprobate wish to be thought excusable in sinning, because they cannot avoid the necessity of sinning; especially since this necessity is imposed on them by the ordination of God. But we deny this to be a just excuse; because the ordination of God, by which they complain they are destined to destruction, is guided by equity, *unknown indeed to us*, but undubitably certain." Calvin forgot the maxim of the schools, De non apparentibus, et non existentibus, eadem est ratio.

The *total depravity* of the unregenerate natural man, is another part of the Calvinistic doctrine. If man be thus naturally and radically depraved and inclined to all evil, a state out of which he cannot emerge by any mere effort of his own, nor unless by an effectual call—supernatural aid—by divine assistance, imparted only to the elect, whose fault is it? Did he make himself? Did he form for himself at his birth, the innate tendencies and propensities by which his conduct is guided? Did not the creator form him, and place him where he is? Was this clay in the hands of the potter consulted upon the occasion? Ought the Almighty to punish a being because he is depraved, when it is the Almighty who made him so?

Then again, if he cannot become regenerate—if he cannot receive the new birth which is to alter his dispositions, till it pleases God, or unless it please God to call him from sin, is it his fault? Why does not God Almighty dispense to the poor sinner the necessary and effectual call by which he becomes born anew, and changed from sin to righteousness? Can the sinner to whom this call is refused, be justly punished because he is not called; and punished too by that Almighty being who alone having the power refuses to call him?

These are strange doctrines to apply to a benevolent, a just, and a merciful God; attributes which no more belong to the God of the Calvinists, than to the Arimanes of the Persians, or the Satan of the Christians. Is there indeed one remnant of evil left, in which their Devil can be clothed?

Irresistible grace. If the grace of God be irresistible, what merit has the creature in yielding to and complying with this gift of the Creator? Upon this scheme, all merit, all deserving, all virtue, all righteousness, is completely done away with. The Presbyterians indeed avow, that when this grace is imparted, no merit of the creature of any kind or sort, is a moving cause with God Almighty to confer this favor. (Conf. 3, 5.) All the language of praise and blame, ought therefore to be expunged from their vocabulary. Equally absurd upon the Calvinistic hypothesis, is the language of reward and punishment, for all voluntarity is excluded. To reward where there can be no merit, and to punish where there can be no blame, since all things happen in the order and course unchangeably prescribed for their occurrence, are equally unjust and absurd.

Particular redemption. Election and reprobation. The doctrine of the Calvinists on this leading subject is, that God Almighty, from all eternity, of his own free will and pleasure, and to shew his sovereign power and authority, not in consequence of any foreknowledge, though accompanied by foreknowledge, nor in consequence of any merit or demerit in the conduct or character of the creature, did infallibly, and unchangeably pre-ordain, that certain men and angels should be chosen and destined for final salvation, and others for final reprobation and eternal damnation, to the horrible torments of body and soul in hell fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, and for all the wicked or non elect. That in consequence of this election unto salvation, the persons so elected to be redeemed, receive while living an effectual call, from sin unto grace; they are justified, adopted, sanctified, and finally saved by the redeeming blood of Christ, who died to save, not all mankind, but the elect only. While all the rest of mankind, constituting the non elect or reprobate, for no cause or reason God thereunto moving, except to shew his own "power and sovereignty and his glorious grace and glorious justice," are consigned to eternal torments; the effectual call, and saving grace imparted to the elect being purposely withholden from the unfortunate wretches so consigned to eternal misery; whose hearts are hardened by the Almighty, (Conf. v. 6,) and who are utterly unable to do any thing that can extricate them from this horrible doom; the natural dispositions, inclinations, tendencies and propensities, with which it has pleased God to send them into the world, irresistibly inclining them to all manner of sin and evil. (Conf. vi. throughout.) I aver this to be a fair and honest account of the Presbyterian—Calvinistic doctrine of particular redemption, election and reprobation; and in addition to the passages already cited, I refer to the very common books, to be had at every bookseller's, and to be found in every Presbyterian family, containing the Westminster confession of faith, and the larger and shorter Catechisms of the Calvinists and Presbyterians; constituting the present acknowledged creed of that sect. There are several late editions; I have before me one of 1813, and another 1821. Probably there are some later.

My authorities for all I say, will be found by referring to the index of this Sectarian Manual, under the heads, Effectual Calling, Election, Grace, Redemption, Reprobation. I have carefully read this *vade mecum*, and I make the present reference to save copying the passages from a book every where to be found, and for the convenience of the reader. If I have misrepresented, detection is easy. Before I enter upon Election and Reprobation, I wish to introduce the following quotation: (Confess. x. 4) "others not elected, &c. cannot be saved; much less can men not possessing the *Christian* religion, be saved in any other way whatever; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious and to be detested."

Upon this system of doctrine, I make the following remarks—

1. According to the latest calculations, the inhabitants of our globe amount in round numbers to 1,000,000,000, of whom, one fourth are nominally Christians. The rest, are Mahomedans, Hindoos, Pagans and Jews.

Of these 250,000,000 of nominal Christians, that great whore of Babylon clothed in scarlet, who sitteth on seven hills, and whose representative is Anti-Christ or the Pope, claims about 150,000,000. The Protestants consist of members of the Greek Church, Lutherans, Arminians, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, Arians, Socinians, Unitarians and Univer-

salists, Deists in very great numbers; and Calvinists, who form by no means the largest division. If the Calvinists, comprising the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Independents amount to 10,000,000, it is the very utmost extent of reasonable calculation; for out of Scotland and the United States, they are scarcely known.

We must exclude from salvation, all those who never heard of Christ, such as the Pagans; for although their ignorance is involuntary, they are undoubtedly among the non elect, be their moral conduct ever so exemplary. (Confess. x. 4. Larg. Cat. Qu. 60.) Salvation comes not by works, but by faith; and before a sinner is effectually called, all his good works, as men call them, are sinful in the eyes of God. We exclude also, all the Papists, Arians, Arminians, Socinians, Unitarians, Universalists, Quakers, Swedenborgians and Deists, who reject God's decrees, and the tenets of election and reprobation; and whose faith is unsound. There remain, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, for these may be considered as Orthodox in their essential doctrines.

So difficult indeed are the marks and terms of salvation to be ascertained, being settled by God's decrees from all eternity, that no man can judge of the number of the elect. Good conduct is no criterion, for it is common among the non elect; and a sinner once effectually called, may still sin on, secure of final perseverance and ultimate salvation though he be a very demon upon earth; a death bed repentance will cure the evil, and his soul will be wafted to the regions of bliss! Let us suppose one half of the *orthodox in profession*, to be saved; then will the balance sheet of God's mercy eventuate in 995,000,000 of mankind damned—consigned to everlasting torments of soul and body, and 5,000,000 singled out to join the heavenly host! Truly, as the Church of England says in her 17th article on election, "this is a most sweet and comfortable doctrine!"

A generation is about thirty five years; hence God Almighty is kind enough to the devil to people his dominions with about 2970 or near 3000 millions of human creatures every century! What then? "Hath not the potter power over his clay?"

What is there in the history of human depravity—what is there of most monstrous and diabolical conception, that can compare with these horrible imputations on the character of the Deity—on the character of a God of infinite justice, mercy, and benevolence? And yet the maintainers of these opinions are the very foremost to accuse others of heresy, infidelity, and blasphemy! As if any scheme of religion that ever entered the furious brain of a demoniac, could equal the dreadful impieties they profess!

I know well, and am fully aware of the practical unfairness, of judging of a man's character and conduct from the conclusions that may be drawn from his speculative opinions. I know and acknowledge the excellent character of many, who profess to hold the Calvinistic tenets. But they are good and kind, and honest and moral, from their own good and kind natural dispositions—from a sense of the propriety due to their station in society—from the strong motive of acquiring honestly the esteem and approbation of society—because never having given themselves the trouble of thinking deeply on their religious creed, they can hardly be said to hold these or any specific opinions—because they assent to it having been taught it in their infancy, and hearing it every Sabbath from their pastor in the pulpit—because a mere outward assent, and a regular payment of their Church dues answers all their worldly purposes—because they have neither time, or learning, or talent, or motive to scrutinize very nicely into

the doctrines they have been so long accustomed to adopt on the authority of others. These are the causes why the speculative doctrines of this abominable creed, do not make the holders of them perfect demons of bigotry, rancor, and intolerance toward those who oppugn them. But where a deliberate adoption of these tenets induces the holder to act in conformity to them, it cannot but be that his temper is soured, that he becomes malignant, intolerant, and full of deep rooted hatred toward those who as he thinks in opposing him, oppose God. *Undoubtedly, as a class of preachers and teachers, the most rancorous, the most obstinate, the most intolerant and persecuting, the most avaricious, ambitious and dangerous, are the Presbyterian Clergy of the United States. Their designs however are more than suspected; their views of establishing a compulsory national religion, an unholy alliance between church and state, and a regular system of* TYTHES, *are now pretty well understood.*

But let us proceed to other prominent objections, against the Calvinistic creed.

2. Then, all definite ideas of right and wrong, truth and error are here confounded; and caprice, injustice, cruelty, and wrath are links of the Calvinistic chain that connects God with his creatures. In their moral government and disposition, neither man, nor angels, nor devils accept any agency whatever, except in entire subserviency to God's *irresistible decrees* framed before the foundation of the world—decrees, by which millions upon millions of rational creatures brought into existence at God's command, and in conformity to his own mere will and pleasure, have been from all eternity "unchangeably destined" to everlasting misery, *without any foresight of any thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereunto!* (Vindex 61.)

3. This is horrible blasphemy against the character of God Almighty, who by this doctrine is transformed into a tyrant, furious, revengeful, capricious, cruel, and wicked, far beyond our worst conception of any earthly despot, inasmuch as omnipotence is added to these attributes, and eternal duration to his vindictive punishment. He is hereby represented as dividing all the human beings, whom he proposed to bring into existence, into two unequal classes; the smaller number his caprice loads with favors; but upon the larger portion, he pours forth his curses, his vengeance, and his wrath, without the least regard to the merit or demerit of either! (Ib.)

Is this religion? Can such a being be a fit object of worship? Is it possible not to contemplate with horror and strong disgust a tyrant so detestable? Is it from such an example we are to take our lessons of benevolence, and to learn peace on earth and good will toward men?

4. It makes all prayer, all preaching, perfect mockery. The Calvinists affirm that the future state and condition of every soul has been irrevocably determined from all eternity. *Infallibly, unchangeably,* are the words used. Who then shall presume to thwart the *unchangeable* decrees of God! Of what use is prayer or preaching, or the class of men called the clergy? Is it in their power by any effort to save a single reprobate from the eternal death to which God has unalterably doomed him? Is there under such circumstances common honesty in accepting money for preaching to nopurpose? If it be answered, the clergy are the means of calling the elect, I reply in the words of the confession of faith, that God did from all eternity decree all the means thereunto; so that the ministry of the clergy is useless, for the elect will be effectually and infallibly called without it

What then are these Calvinistic clergy but pretenders, who take money knowing their services to be useless.

At any rate, what can palliate the manifest injustice of taking money from the *reprobate?* For it is well known, the Presbyterian clergy do not merely accept, but through all kind of meanness beg money with importunity, not to be put off, from all classes of society. These clergy exact pay for services which they must acknowledge to be vain and worthless, inasmuch as nothing can prevent the decrees of God from coming to pass. If I am of the number of the elect, I must be saved—if not, I am lost without remedy. Preaching, praying, and exhorting, therefore, are useless, except as schemes to cheat the congregation out of their money. *At any rate, whether these strange doctrines be true or not, a hired and paid ministry is in direct contradiction to the precepts of Jesus Christ; and is destructive of the honesty, the independence, the credit, and the credibility of these money-loving clergy.* Are these men—Swiss troops of the church militant who fight for pay and rations, competent witnesses to the truth of what they preach? Is not their admissibility and their credibility as witnesses destroyed by their being hired and paid to say what they say, and to do what they do? They come before their congregations defiled with filthy lucre, *bribed* to compromise with their consciences, if they find it expedient to do so. What court of justice would hear for a moment a hired, paid, and bribed witness?

Yet have these men the impudence to abuse infidelity! What infidel is hired, paid, and bribed to promulgate *his* opinions? Is it not his manifest interest to suppress them, considering the prejudices of the public, worked up by the interested outcries and calumnies of hired priests—of a clergy who vociferate like the Pagan priests of old, and from the same interested motive, "away with them, away with them—great is Diana of the Ephesians!" No wonder that such a God should have such a priesthood! They are truly benefitting each other. Are such men to be put in competition with the fearless and conscientious infidel?

5. In defence of this system it has been argued, that God's decrees were made in full view of sins *voluntarily* committed; and thus the reprobate sinning *witlingly* is punished justly. This amounts to an abandonment of the decrees. Thus, God leaves the reprobate to act agreeably to his own volitions; and then passes on his *voluntary sins* the decree of *confirmation.* Now, nothing takes place here, but what would have occurred had no decree been made. The amount of the argument is, that God has decreed what *should* happen, because he foresaw that it *would* happen! But in the confession of faith, the decrees of election and reprobation are declared to have been made by God, *without any foresight of any thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto.* Conf. iii. 5.

"Hence it is manifest that the God of Calvinism, adapts the volitions, and actions of men to his decrees, and not his decrees to their actions or volitions; as the musician adapts the strings of his instrument to the tune he designs to play, or the mechanician adapts the various parts of his machine to the effect he means to produce. Now, in acting under the compulsory force of God's decrees, the elect and the reprobate pursue the one the narrow, the other the broad way, with the same kind of *willingness* that the instrument produces its tone, and the machine its motion. In the same sense as the gun in the hands of the murderer, kills willingly; the sword of the assassin enters the body willingly; and the poison acts willingly on the stomach. According to this argument of the Calvinists, the

gun, the sword, and the poison are the real authors of the murders, and not the hand that directs them!" (Vindex. 66.)

Moreover, all mankind, elect and non elect, according to the Calvinistic doctrine, are by the original corruption of human nature, the natural depravity of man, equally prone to sin. (Conf. vi. 5, xiii. 2, xvii. 3, Catch. qu. 78.) But, without any cause or reason God thereunto moving, he was pleased to take away the sin of the elect, and all the consequences of it, and to afford them the effectual calling, whereby they become justified, adopted, sanctified and saved; and from like absence of all reason and motive, to refuse it to the non elect. From the beginning, God knew what would be the course of conduct of the non elect, as the necessary result of the original, innate, natural depravity which he ordained to accompany these miserable wretches from their birth. He knew also their final and horrible doom. Why did he bring them into existence? Why did he withhold what he might so easily have given—the effectual calling? Why did he permit them to go on sinning? Why did he harden their hearts for the purpose of making them to sin? (Conf. v. 6.) If I see my infant crawling toward a precipice, from whence he will fall and be dashed to pieces, and I quietly look on while this happens within my reach, am I guiltless?

Every other sect of christians speak of, and pourtray their God, as just, merciful, righteous, impartial, benevolent; as no respecter of persons, but the kind and common parent of all mankind. But what are we to say of this God of the Calvinists? What language of detestation can be sufficiently strong?

6. These tenets are contrary, it is said, to what the scriptures teach. It may be so. But I abstain from this argument. There is hardly a shade of difference between the God of the Calvinists and the God of the Jews, as described in the Old Testament. They are equally horrible, detestable, diabolical. I will not heap quotation upon quotation, and proof upon proof. Let me cite one passage only; the proper inscription for the Oriflamme of Persecution, exceeding in devilishness any thing to be found in any other book, ancient or modern.

13 Deut. 6. "*If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thy own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people that are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth—thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him; neither shalt thou spare; neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death; and afterwards the hand of all the people; and thou shalt stone him with stones till he die.*"

The rest of the chapter is in the same strain of merciless exhortation, in order that "the lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger." But I am sick of these cruelties, and shall be glad to close this picture.

The last part of the Calvinistic doctrine which I propose to consider, is—

The *final perseverance* of the saints, or once in grace always in grace. (Confess. xvii. 1.) They whom God hath accepted in his beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from a state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. (See also the whole of this chapter.)

A Calvinist considers himself as one of the elect. What motive can

such a man have to abstain from any vicious indulgence, any sin, any crime? He may fall foully; he cannot fall finally. His salvation is sure, let him do what he will.

What has the regenerate man to do, but yield without compunction to any wickedness to which his concupiscence, avarice, malice or other passions and propensities shall prompt him? If conscience chides, what power will conscience have, while he is sure that no evil will befal him at last? He is elected, and the God of heaven will not circumvent his own determined purpose. Sin and holiness are the same to a man who is among the elect; they will equally carry him through, and make him an instrument in aiding the designs of Providence, and advancing the glory of God.

"Again, in this course of *perseverance*, what concern have the elect with the rules of action, principles of morality, the laws of society, and those wholesome restraints imposed to keep up harmony and peace among men? As far as these redound to their convenience, they may think it advisable to regard them, but no farther; and not even to this extent from any sense of moral obligation. Men may form systems of ethics, talk of virtue, frame wise laws, confide in the moral sense, and thus hope to curb the licentious and passionate; but all these will be shadowy things in the eyes of the elect. They are under a law superior to any of human fabrication; they are shielded by the promise and power of God; they have a more dignified calling than the mass of grovelling mortals; they are chosen vessels never to be broken; children of light; heirs of an inheritance which no changes of time or eternity can render uncertain."

"We might not stop with the laws of men, and human principles of right and goodness. In what respect are such favored beings concerned with the laws of God, the precepts of the Scripture, the commands of Christ? The decree of final perseverance has no conditions. It is not said, be humble, repent, obey, love God, love your neighbor, and then you will be able to persevere. It is a main part of the scheme, that it is not incumbered with conditions. Hence the gospel rules are useless; the bible might be blotted from existence without loss to the elect. Indeed, according to this plan, Christianity itself, is only a theatrical exhibition, acted over as it was resolved on, before the foundation of the world; raising the curiosity and admiration of mortals, but not producing any effect on their character and destiny." (Sparkes' Inquiry, Boston, 1823, p. 328, &c.)

There are also many other shrewd observations on the glaring inconsistencies involved in the Calvinistic doctrines, by Vindex in Truth Advocated, p. 77; but enough has been said to show the character and manifest tendeney of this strange creed. Neither do I attempt to shew its contradictions to the plainest doctrines of the Christian Scriptures, because from these Scriptures it is manifest that the quarrelsome theologians of the various sects into which Christianity is divided, can prove or disprove any doctrine whatever.

I ask of the reader who has perused the foregoing pages—

Is Calvinism calculated to make a man a better member of society?

Does it not set its votaries free from all the obligations of morality?

Is it a religion that ought to be countenanced in civil society?

Is not the profession of the Calvinistic priesthood, an abominable fraud on the people?

Is there any form of infidelity to be imagined whose tendency is not infinitely better than Calvinism?

Yet these are the men who constitute the most numerous, the most wealthy, the most arrogant class of priests in these United States; a class which has contrived to get absolute dominion over every seminary of education, every school and college in the United States; whose known and avowed design it is to make Presbyterianism the religion of this country by law established—to make themselves independent of their congregations—and to erect a church paid by TYTHES; exacted from the people!

I had intended to delineate some of the practices of the Calvinistic Presbyterian clergy—the horrible tyranny of their church government—the base use to which the character-books of each congregation have been attempted to be put, particularly by a late synod in Philadelphia.

But I forbear, those who are not convinced by the foregoing exposition of their abominations in doctrine, will be preached to in vain, unless by the men who control his imbecile understanding.

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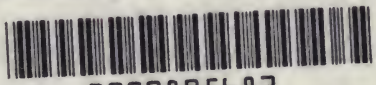

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